

BED BUGS IN COLONIAL AMERICA

“Oyl of Turpentine, aetherial spirit of turpentine, best varnish for chairmakers, and the finest amber-coloured rosin, are made and sold by John Braser, living back of Trinity-Church burying ground, near the North-River, either large or small quantities . . . N.B. The spirit of turpentine applied to bed-steads and those places where bugs breed, and lodge, effectually destroys them, and prevents them from harbouring those places where it is applied; especially if they should be fresh drawn, and a few drops will effectually take out greasy spots from cloaths, or on floor.—Also the best Pot-Ash.”—*The New-York Mercury*, February 23, 1756.

AN OLD USE FOR COCKROACHES

Dr. Samuel X. Radbill in his paper on “Child Hygiene Among the American Indians,” (Texas Reports on Biology and Medicine, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 419–512, Winter, 1945) states that among the Nanticoke Indians, various methods were in use to avert or cure whooping cough. One of these involved the use of cockroaches. As many cockroaches were collected as there were children afflicted with the whooping cough. Each cockroach was named after a child and each child placed a roach in a bottle and kept it tightly corked. When the roach died, the sickness was believed to disappear. During this period the child’s bowels were kept open so that the charm would not react and kill him.

A city dweller having whooping cough was advised to put a cockroach in a thimble, to tie it up in a cloth and wear it around the neck. This was supposed to stop the whooping.—Ed.